THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA) : (a) and (b) Yes Sir. The main points discussed in the State Ministers/Secretries conference of Mining & Geology was held in December, 1996 at New Delhi were (i) New guidelines for grant of large areas. (ii) Streamlining of procedure for grant of Prospecting Licences and Mining Leases (iii) Problems faced by foreign companies in obtaining mining concessions (iv) New Mineral Policy, 1993, amendments to the MM (R&D) Act, 1957, MCR, 1960 and MCDR, 1988 (v) Environmental and Forest clearances (vi) Supply of data to prospective investors (vii) Problems faced by GSI, IBM with State Governments in carrying out exploration activities (viii) Development of granite resources.

(c) to (e) The Government constituted a Study Group on 30.1.95 for carrying out detailed review of rates of royalty and dead rent applicable to major minerals (other than Coal, lignite and sand for stowing) The Study Group submitted its report in November, 1995 and the proposal for revision of rates is under consideration of the Government.

[Translation]

Relaxation of Licence Fee

905. SHRI DEVI BUX SINGH :
DR. RAMESH CHAND TOMAR :
SHRI RADHA MOHAN SINGH :

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to provide relaxation to Basic Telephone Service Companies in the income-tax provisions on the payment of Licence Fee;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the reasons for providing special relaxation in income tax provisions by the Union Government?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) and (b) The Department of Telecommunications has recommended to the Ministry of Finance to treat the licence fee paid by the prospective operators as deductible expenditure under Section 37(i) of the Income Tax Act, as the licence fee would seem to fulfil the conditions envisaged under the said Section of the Act.

(c) As the licence fees paid has been recommended for treatment under an already existing section of the Income Tax Act, no special relaxation is being sought.

Air Traffic Services for Tourism

906. SHRI RAJESH RANJAN ALIAS PAPPU YADAV : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that in the absence of adequate and better air traffic services the development and expansion of tourism has been affected in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken or proposed to be taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) and (b) Improvement of air transport services is a continuous process which involves huge investments for fleet acquisition, construction of airports and othe infrastructure facilities.

(c) Opening of the domestic sector to private airlines has injected an element of competition in aviation industry and in-turn has improved the frequency and quality of air services in the country. Indian Airlines has increased its capacity deployment by 15% and taken steps to improve the quality of services both on ground and in the air. Air India is also taking steps to improve its product, image and on-time performance to attract more passengers and to improve revenue. New destinations have been added in the recent past to improve passenger satisfaction. Airports Authority of India is planning to spend Rs. 3490 crores during 9th five year plan period for upgrading various airports. Number of Charter flights are landing at various tourist destinations consequent upon liberal charter policy of the Government.

[English]

Improvement in Outlay on Tourism

907. SHRI YELLAIAH NANDI :
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY :

Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Planning Commission has been urged by the Ministry to improve the outlay on tourism for allocation in the Ninth Five Year Plan;

(b) if so, the total amount suggested for inclusion in the Ninth Five Year Plan;

(c) the extent to which the Planning Commission has agreed to the proposal of the Ministry;

(d) whether tourism promotion has been given top priority in the Ninth Five Year Plan; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRI SRIKANTA JENA) : (a) Yes Sir.

(b) Rs. 5780.00 Crores.

(c) to (e) The Ninth Plan has not been finalised by the Planning Commission.